



DEBRA BOWEN | SECRETARY OF STATE | STATE OF CALIFORNIA
MANAGEMENT SERVICES | CONTRACT SERVICES

1500 11th Street, Room 460 | Sacramento, CA 95814 | Tel (916) 653-5974 | Fax (916) 653-8324 | www.sos.ca.gov

September 22, 2008

**Request for Interest
RFI #08-017
Secretary of State Voting Access for Individuals with Disabilities
VOTE Grant Program**

California county elections officials are invited to review and respond to this Request for Interest (RFI), entitled #08-017 – Secretary of State Secretary of State Voting Access for Individuals with Disabilities VOTE Grant Program (hereinafter referred to as the VOTE Grant Program). The purpose of this RFI is to solicit interest from you to enable the Secretary of State to develop a grant program under the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) of 2002 regarding accessibility of polling places.

In the opinion of the Secretary of State's Office, this Request for Interest is complete and without need of explanation. However, if you have questions, or should you need any clarifying information, the contact person for this RFI is:

Contract Services
Secretary of State
(916) 653-5974
contractservices@sos.ca.gov

Please note that no *verbal* information given will be binding upon the State unless such information is issued in writing as an official addendum.

Introduction

The Secretary of State is issuing this Request for Interest (RFI) to solicit interest from California county elections officials for a possible competitive grant program to carry out provisions of the Help America Vote Act (2002) to establish, expand and improve access to and participation in the election process by individuals with disabilities.

The previous allocation for funds in fiscal years 2003 - 2005 was based on the Proposition 41 formula, (equal weighting to a jurisdiction's number of registered voters, voter turnout in the previous four election cycles, its number of polling places and its number of voting age population) which resulted in contracts between the counties and the Secretary of State.

The Secretary of State is considering the VOTE Grant Program to allocate funds awarded for fiscal years 2006-2008 allowing us to move away from the formula-based allocation for purposes of this grant program. The VOTE Grant Program would allow for more innovative and thoughtful programs and activities to address barriers to the electoral process for individuals with a full range of disabilities. California county elections officials are in a unique position to collaborate or partner with disability community organizations and, as appropriate, community-based and nonprofit organizations to carry out programs and activities to increase access to the electoral process by individuals with disabilities.

Goals for VOTE Grant Program

- Making polling places, including the path of travel, entrances, exits, and voting areas of each polling facility, accessible to individuals with the full range of disabilities;
- Providing the same opportunity for access and participation (including privacy and independence) to individuals with the full range of disabilities
- Providing training for election officials, poll workers and election volunteers on how best to promote the access and participation of individuals with the full range of disabilities; and
- Providing individuals with the full range of disabilities with information about the accessibility of polling places.

Programs and activities eligible to receive funds may include, among other things:

- Development of an 800 number or other free access system for voters with disabilities to determine if their polling places are accessible;
- Modifications of polling places including: installation of hand rails, construction or improvement of wheelchair ramps, installation of threshold ramps, purchase of mobile ramps, wedges for thresholds, erecting signs regarding accessible parking spaces, adjustment of existing door handles or frames, installation of guide rails for wheel chairs, curb cuts, and equipment to survey accessibility of polling places;
- Development or improvement of ADA-compliant web sites to fully accommodate blind and visually impaired voters;

- Development and distribution of audio materials, construction of web-based information (including photos) permitting voters with disabilities to view their polling places prior to Election Day, programs to place “early voting” stations with accessible voting equipment to enhance the privacy and independence for voters with disabilities;
- Exploring mechanisms to facilitate voters with disabilities getting to the polling places;
- Development of a training program, including audiovisual and web-based training, for elections officials and poll workers;
- Conducting special training sessions dedicated to increasing the awareness of and sensitivity to the needs of persons with the full range of disabilities;
- Developing materials for elections officials to use to train poll workers and volunteers;
- Production of materials to assist in recruiting poll workers with disabilities;
- Designing and implementing outreach programs to the disability community;
- Contracting with a disability specialist to implement an outreach and information program for the disability community;
- Producing materials for distribution to persons with disabilities regarding their rights as voters;
- Production of radio or television public service announcements to inform voters with disabilities about their rights as voters; and
- Promote the use of permanent vote by mail ballots for those voters who wish to take advantage of that program.

Expression of Interest

Please complete the attached Notification of Interest and return no later than **Friday, October 24, 2008**. Forms may be e-mailed, faxed or sent to the following address:

Secretary of State
Attn: Contract Services
1500 11th Street. Room 460
Sacramento 95814
(916) 653-8324 fax
ContractServices@sos.ca.gov

This RFI remains the property of the State at all times, and all responses to this RFI, once delivered, become the property of the State. If the bidder chooses to submit their response via email, the State assumes no responsibility if the response is not received prior to the response submittal deadline due to being blocked by the SOS email filter.

**Notification of Interest
in Response to RFI #08-017**

**Secretary of State Voting Access for Individuals with Disabilities
VOTE Grant Program**

The County of _____ hereby notifies the Secretary of State of the County's interest in the development of a grant program under the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) of 2002 regarding accessibility of polling places.

___ Yes we are interested.

___ We are not interested at this time

Registrar of Voters

Date